

JOINT ENGINEERING PROGRAMS

Recommendation

The council staff recommends:

- That proposed joint baccalaureate engineering programs involving the University of Kentucky or the University of Louisville be considered within the band of existing baccalaureate engineering programs at UK and UofL. This means that joint baccalaureate engineering programs involving UK or UofL could be established with review by the boards of all universities involved in the joint program without further council review. No joint engineering program can be established without board review from all partner universities.
- That the council recognize the following four proposed joint baccalaureate engineering programs as the first such programs to be covered by the review process recommended above: Western Kentucky University and UofL in electrical engineering, WKU and UK in mechanical engineering, WKU and UK in civil engineering, and Murray State University and UofL in electrical and telecommunications engineering. All four programs are scheduled to begin fall 2001.
- That the council consider the extensive statewide discussion of these four programs in 2001-02 as fulfilling the required 45-day Kentucky Postsecondary Program Proposal System commentary period. Future joint engineering proposals will be posted to the KPPPS Web-system for statewide review.
- That the council commend Western Kentucky University, Murray State University, the University of Kentucky, and the University of Louisville for progress made toward creating the four joint baccalaureate engineering degree programs.
- That the council request reports from the four universities at its July, September, and November 2001 and January 2002 meetings on the status of the four joint programs.
- That the council affirm its commitment to the July 17, 2000, "Strategy for Statewide Engineering Education in Kentucky." The strategy includes the principle of an accelerated review process for joint baccalaureate engineering programs and the principle of cost-sharing between the commonwealth and the universities for the long-term funding of the proposed joint engineering programs.

Background

Western Kentucky University, Murray State University, the University of Louisville, and the University of Kentucky continue to work closely with council staff to create the first joint baccalaureate engineering programs as envisioned in the July 17, 2000, "Strategy for Statewide Engineering Education in Kentucky." WKU, UofL and UK have made substantial progress to implement their January 12, 2001, "Framework of Agreement" on joint engineering programs. The WKU-UofL-UK Joint Engineering Program Steering Committee expects to agree soon on remaining items, such as admission standards and tuition rates. It is preparing a common letter of welcome to all joint program students. Departmental faculty are working across institutional boundaries to create the curriculum. The WKU Board of Regents has approved the joint programs with UK and UofL; UK senior administrators expect the UK Board of Trustees to vote on the joint program with WKU in November; UofL senior administrators expect the UofL board to review the joint program with WKU by summer 2001. MuSU and UofL have likewise made progress to implement their January 22, 2001, "Framework of Agreement" on joint engineering programs. The MuSU Board of Regents has approved the joint program with UofL; UofL senior administrators anticipate that the UofL board will review the joint program with MuSU by summer 2002.

At its March 19, 2001, meeting, the council approved the means for funding estimated joint engineering program start-up costs in 2001-02 (March 19 agenda items I-1 and I-2). The council staff expects the four universities to sign memoranda of understanding about funding for the program start-up costs before the May 21 council meeting.

Sources for long-term funding of joint engineering programs are under discussion and will require cost-sharing between the state and the universities. The July 17, 2000, engineering strategy refers to a possible council recommendation of appropriate funding for equipment and facilities. The council and the universities should consider such a recommendation as the council develops its 2002-04 budget recommendations. The council should consider how long-term funding for joint engineering programs might be linked to "new economy" proposals.